

ANATOMY OF REGRET: A DEVELOPMENTAL VIEW OF THE DEPRESSIVE POSITION AND A CRITICAL TURN TOWARD LOVE AND CREATIVITY IN THE TRANSFORMING SCHIZOID PERSONALITY

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This article deals with critical psychic transformation in a schizoid personality disorder that evolves in an object relations psychoanalysis in which “developmental mourning” plays a central role. Within a mourning process that allows for the grieving of loss related to arrested separation-individuation development, the analysand confronts the existential grief of regret that had always unconsciously haunted her. The unconscious guilt related to the existential grief of regret had caused much dissociation of self-experience and affect states. The analysand acknowledges her own part in the destruction of primal and current relationships after the traumatic impact of her early life is understood. This allows her to repair current relationships, both within her internal and external worlds so that she can open to capacities for love and creativity. The analysand’s courage to consciously grapple with her regret (loss and guilt combined) allows her to relinquish self-sabotaging character defenses such as contempt and emotional withdrawal. Consequently, a second marriage is salvaged and enriched, and the analysand’s relationship with her two children is dramatically improved.

KEY WORDS: mourning; regret; existential grief; contempt; compassion.

Melanie Klein spoke about the depressive position capacity to tolerate guilt as well as loss in relation to a loved one as being fundamental to psychic integration (1940/1975, 1957/1980). Klein differs from all other object relations theorists who only speak of object loss in relation to developmental arrest versus continuing psychic development. I follow Klein’s focus on guilt as well as loss in the ambivalence of human relationship. However, as for Klein, guilt in relation to loss is existential guilt, not neurotic guilt. I conceptualize this dynamic as psychic regret. I have found the capacity to face regret to be a pivotal in psychic change and self-integration. Psychic regret involves the conscious ability to face the grief related to existential guilt and to communicate the nature of one’s guilt to oneself, and often to

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another within-personal relationship. In my view, the human capacity to face regrets consciously has played a significant part in an overall critical “developmental mourning process” (Kavaler-Adler, 1993a, 1996, 2003a, 2003b) that allows for the deepening and sustaining of relationship. Such psychic regret and its integration of split-off aggressive aspects of the personality also promote the development of self-agency, self-reflection, and psychic dialectic helping to resolve conflicts over love and hate. These conflicts over love and hate can relate to external relationships or to internal ones and to one’s relationship to one’s self (i.e., loving or hating the self, which relates to the present but also to the feelings and impulses towards the primary objects that have been internalized, the most basic one being related to the primal mother).

I’ve been writing about regret in articles and books, including *Mourning, Spirituality and Psychic Change: A New Object Relations View of Psychoanalysis* (2003a). In the meantime, Shabad has written an important book on mourning (2001) that relates to some overlapping issues. However, Shabad views regret as related to the self and signifies remorse as an existential guilt dynamic related to another. By contrast, my view of regret is an object relations one in which the internal world and its internal objects are highly reflective of relations with others and vice versa, so regret toward the self-sabotage of the self also becomes seen as intimately related to the internal pathological relations with the other within the internal world. Therefore, I find remorse and regret to interweave intrapsychically, and when regret is made conscious all differentiations can be made. In working out external object relations, the differentiation of self and internal other, when both are projected onto an external other, becomes highly relevant to all modes of ego development, particularly in terms of self-agency and intersubjective relatedness to the other. Facing regret is an entryway into the developmental enhancement of interiority and observing ego reflection.

For Melanie Klein, true reparation that emerges through a genuine experience of guilt and loss can be as passionate as a sexual act. From my perspective, authentic regret is a passionate experience whose grief affect level merges loss and existential guilt. The cognitive level of insight that comes with such affective experience is one of identifying and defining the differentiated nature of one’s regret, as one comes on the painful awareness of hurting oneself through hurting the other. In Klein’s terms, this can be worded as hurting the primal internal object through hurting external objects that serve as displacements for the primal maternal other on an unconscious level. Following from this view, to face regret is to face the capacity to change.

My clinical experience illustrates that regret is a signpost to hope if it can be consciously felt and processed. If it cannot be tolerated, it can turn to

despair and reinforce prior traumatic loss and developmental arrest. I believe that the holding environment (Modell, 1975, 1976; Winnicott, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c) of the clinical situation allows for the tolerance and processing of regret. This can then lead to critical psychic change, as a working through process occurs in which primal modes of regret are reexperienced and relived. The following case of an analysand, whom I will call Sharon, illustrates this. The transformation of a schizoid psychic structure, with an accompanying negative or self-devaluing narcissistic image system, can be clearly seen in her case.

THE CASE OF SHARON

Sharon first contacted me through a letter after reading one of my books. In her letter she said that she identified with much of what I wrote, particularly descriptions of a mother and child that seemed to relate to her and her own mother. She spoke of the mother who had no boundaries, who merged herself with her daughter, and of the daughter who consequently develops a sealed off self, split away from contact with others. She also spoke of my demon lover theme as having puzzled her at first, because she saw her father as an inert, depressed, and passive being, not as an active monster. However, she realized that his passivity and unavailability had left her with the impression of men as part objects rather than as whole and related beings, and that the effect of their withdrawn nature was, in fact, demonic, although not overtly so. This, she wrote, caused her to have portrayed men in her creative writing as lifeless, wimpy creatures. This resulted in getting rejection notes to several plays she had written in which she was told that her male characters did not come alive.

Sharon was not a full-time writer. Her creative writing was her dream for the future, but she worked as an accountant in a large bureaucratic firm. At the time that she first wrote to me she was a single mother, living alone with her son, divorced for several years from an alcoholic, and was just beginning to date a new man. She was also seeing a psychotherapist once a week, someone who knew that I wrote about women writers. Knowing that Sharon was working at becoming a writer, Sharon's psychotherapist had referred Sharon to my books. From Sharon's description this therapy seems to have been supportive in nature, with no analytic work leading to insight and with very little emotional communication between her and her therapist. At some point in this therapy, the psychotherapist recommended that she see me for psychoanalysis, acknowledging her own limitations in not practicing psychoanalysis. The first five years of therapy with me were rather uneventful in terms of psychic change or development. Sharon maintained a schizoid compromise. She resisted coming more than once a

week, and after some initial curiosity, began to come out of a sense of pure obligation, resenting each trip to my office. She resented having to be there at all. Yet, for the most part she kept these resentments to herself, withholding them from me, as she withheld much of herself. Once she did reveal that she thought I was detached and isolated in my professional attitude. Later she would see this as a projection of her own detachment, but at the time, she thought that I probably experienced her as a burden. She thought I was performing some perfunctory role, that I only put up with seeing her because she was paying me. She only told me this later, after her assumption had changed. She also had assumed that I would probably not want to have anything to do with her if I was not being paid on a professional basis to see her. She saw herself as boring and dull and as lacking the life energy of enthusiasm.

During these early years in treatment she remarried, had a daughter with her new husband, and she often spoke of being controlled by her son's demands on her. Although distant in manner and flat in affect, Sharon did reveal some of her internal life through dreams. The dreams revealed how imprisoned she felt within her own psychic structure. They revealed how cold she felt inside and how stereotypic the world seemed to her. They revealed a sealed-off internal state in which her aggression was split off and frozen in a detached and cynical attitude of contempt. They also revealed Sharon's sense of herself as a dysfunctional and incompetent being.

One early dream was a visual vista in which Sharon stood on the beach, looking away from the ocean, standing statically like a statue, with a lion standing on one of her shoulders. The lion seemed to symbolize her sealed-off and frozen aggression. At this early time Sharon was unaware of her cynical and contemptuous attitude, which she enacted mentally on both others and on herself. Frozen rage, personified in the figure of the lion, had become a whole dissociated part of Sharon. The lion figure could have also represented the kind of split-off, antilibidinal ego structure that Fairbairn (1952) described as characteristic of the schizoid character. At the end of this dream, Sharon has the image of a prison. She describes it as if she is on the outside of it (as she was outside of life), but its image can be seen as an implication that she herself is in the prison. The further implications highlighted by her own association was that she had been placed in a prison due to some criminal activity that she related to the lionlike rage within her. In its dissociated state, her lion rage threatened to become criminally out of control. Freezing it was her way to keep it in check. Sharon's state of dissociation created a prison within her.

In another early dream, Sharon lives in a house where the plumbing does not function and is in a state of disrepair. Her associations lead to the conclusion that the house represented Sharon's self that was not function-

ing right, reminiscent of Bion's (1967) "attacks on linking." Attacks on linking occur consequent to early and "cumulative trauma" (Khan, 1974). Sharon could picture the house as her self with her internal plumbing not working. She had always felt that her internal connections within her were not working properly. She felt disconnected in so many ways, as if the links between various parts of her were not connected. Given such psychic attacks on the linking within her own psyche, Sharon had to make careful written notes in order to remember things, as she was very forgetful. She felt helplessly out of touch when her husband accused her of lacking empathy for what he was going through, which was also an aspect of her general disconnection.

Transference

In her state of detachment, as seen by the view of her internal disconnected plumbing in her dream, Sharon saw me as detached. This view of me transformed as soon as she changed and came to life. Nevertheless, at this time Sharon saw me as strictly professional, in a stereotypic way, which meant to her I was basically indifferent to her as a human being. She had me set up as a mirror of her own sense of detached obligation. Since she felt burdened with this disconnected and distant obligation, she believed that she was a burden to me, a burden I only put up with because of professional responsibility and because I needed to earn a living. I existed as a negative mirror for her. Basically, she could only see me through projective-identification, as an illusive and yet static image within an overall negative image system. By only seeing me once a week, she maintained a "schizoid compromise" (Guntrip, 1976) that allowed her to keep control and to maintain distance from any affect hunger or need. She was about to learn how she did this with everyone in her life.

Until later in treatment I was experienced through projective-identification as part of her self, mainly a detached part, and sometimes as a split-off grandiose self ideal. I was not a differentiated transference projection until later, when I then could be seen as arrogant or biased in my own views. I was never consciously seen as the sadistic and infantile mother who would scapegoat her. This transference picture was consistently placed on her husband, who gave her reason to see him that way.

The False Caretaking Self

Winnicott (1982a) has written about the false caretaking self that is used by the schizoid character, whom he called "false self" patient. Winnicott's false self operates in the external world to ward off the external world contacts that would feel like "impingements" or intrusions to the sealed-off

vulnerable infant/child self of the schizoid character. Such a false caretaking self structure could be seen in Sharon in the early years of her treatment. Her preoccupation with caring for her house as she would try to care for and perfect a fabricated self-structure made the "house" into an external representation of her false self-system. She tried to make her external self by preoccupying herself with cleaning, decorating, and neatness in her house. Simultaneously, in her dreams her house revealed the secret shame-ridden child self within whose "plumbing didn't work." When Sharon married her second husband, which occurred in her third year of treatment, she focused all her energies and interest on choosing a larger more elegant suburban home, and then on decorating, cleaning, and keeping this new home neat. Her new husband's continual messiness within this new home was a constant irritant to her that resulted in many quarrels and arguments. Sharon's husband told her that she seemed to be totally preoccupied with the house and how it looked, so much so that all the other problems with him and the children seemed secondary. Sharon's husband told her that she based her entire sense of well-being on how the house looked.

Sharon's external home seemed to represent both a false caretaking self and a false narcissistic image self. Taking care of her home, when she felt she was totally impotent in the face of depending on anyone else, seemed to be Sharon's way of maintaining a narcissistic sense of self-sufficiency. Fixing up her home was something she could master. Consequently she became her own caretaking self in the process, while simultaneously enacting an insatiable struggle to repair her own narcissistic image in repairing the image of her home. Not until Sharon could have the profound grief experience of regret could she break the spell of the princess in the perfect house, immured against intrusion by an inanimate object that was more dependable for protection and comfort than any person had been for her (see Kavalier-Adler, 1991, on seclusion and Emily Dickinson). The original person Sharon could not trust was her mother, who had instilled in Sharon her own blueprint of general distrust. The mother had always masked her distance with an attitude of contempt.

Looking Into the Face of Medusa: A Core Traumatic Memory and the Opening of the Sealed-Off Central Self

In her state of detachment, Sharon had described horrible incidents from her childhood in a mode of reporting, without affect and with an air of cynicism or indifference that was characterized by such phrases as "It wasn't so bad." With her internal self sealed off, the actual traumatic impact of her childhood was kept at a safe distance as was any memory of her mother's direct impact on her. In fact, Sharon was identified with her mother

as one would identify with the aggressor. But all this was both repressed and dissociated, and remained out of awareness.

In the third year of treatment, there was an incident that demonstrated her identification with the aggressor, which became a whole antilibidinal attitude (Fairbairn, 1952) of self-torment and self-attack. Sharon had decided to help her husband with some research. She went to the home of an Italian professor to interview her on a book she had written. She took her tape recorder, but once inside the professor's home, the professor began speaking so fast that Sharon did not even have time to set up the tape recorder. Sharon tried to scribble down notes but could not keep up. She meekly pleaded with the professor, "I think I should set up the tape recorder now"; however, the professor did not stop. Sharon began to become the victim of some crazy-making thinking of her own that vividly brought her back to her mother in psychic time. Desperate to do this interview, Sharon had set out to be competent in it, trying to force herself into the competence that she felt was beyond her. As the woman chattered on, Sharon began yelling at herself, inside her head, that she should be able to understand this as the professor raced through complicated research data in English. When the professor switched into Italian (a language that Sharon had no knowledge of), Sharon's self-reprimands escalated. She yelled at herself that she should understand Italian and should understand all this woman was saying at this fast pace.

Following the incident with the professor, Sharon declared: "My mother always expected me to do things I couldn't possibly do at the age I was at. So I was always being yelled at for not being able to do things. It made me believe I should be able to do things I couldn't possibly do. I was always bad. So now I yell at myself for not knowing things I couldn't possibly know. My mother could never teach me how to do anything, because it would make her so mad that I didn't know how to do the thing already that she would grab it away from me in a rage and do it herself. I could never learn how to do anything from my mother. My father was just this passive inert ghost, called a saint by my mother, sitting impotently in the background. My goal in life was to not end up like him. If that was what it was like to be good rather than bad, I was better off being bad."

Sharon's reenactment of her mother's emotional control and abuse in this incident with the Italian professor triggered a memory of an early life experience with her mother. The memory suggested how a vicious cycle had begun of Sharon internalizing her mother's reproaches, outlandish expectations, and reprimands as part of an internal Fairbairnian "antilibidinal ego structure" (called "antidependent self" by Seinfeld, 1990), or in Klein's terms, a "primitive superego structure." Through this memory, Sharon could for the first time experience the horrific impact of mother rather than keep-

ing memory merely as an abstract narrative told with detachment. Therefore, the memory could become an entry way into the sealed-off child self within her, which would emerge more later through a group experience. Sharon could begin to connect with the anger that had been sealed off in the split-off area in her psyche, where it had formerly resided as a lion on her shoulder in a dream.

Core Traumatic Memory: Finding the Sealed-Off Central Self

Sharon recalled a memory of being three years old and of being left alone in a park by her mother, along with her brother (2 years older), in the middle of winter. Her mother went off to shop. Sharon expected her mother to come back for her. When hours rather than minutes seemed to pass, she and her brother were freezing and terrified. Sharon did not know the way home. She could not believe that her mother had just left her there and was not coming back for her. Along with her brother, Sharon walked and walked, dragging their sled behind them. She was wet, exhausted, and continually terrified, wearing big heavy snow boots and a snowsuit. She and her brother were confused about which direction to go, and now it was getting darker. Finally, they saw their apartment building. They rang the bell of their apartment. Sharon's mother answered the door, and instead of being happy to see her and happy that she and brother had saved themselves, her mother started to scream—particularly at her—for not staying where she had left them. Her mother seemed to go crazy, screaming and then hitting Sharon, telling her she was "bad." Something inside of Sharon died at that moment, but she did not dare think consciously that her mother was crazy (see Winnicott, 1974, on "Fear of Breakdown"). Instead of looking into the face of a Medusa mother, she tried to psychically survive by thinking she herself was bad (Fairbairn's "moral defense"), and tried to figure out how to be good. Sharon could never figure out how to be good. Although remembering such memories could have brought the reverberating shock of looking into the face of Medusa—as Sharon looked into the face of a mad mother who disowned all her craziness as a form of badness that she projected onto her child—she actually spoke of all the memories and descriptions of her mother in a most detached manner in the beginning.

After the incident with the Italian professor, however, this memory came alive in a way, and Sharon's anger came alive as she recalled her helplessness. It led to her telling the analyst about a whole stereotyped "binary system" of thought that her mother employed and that she had identified with as she was shocked to discover.

The Binary Cognitive System that Bound the Schizoid Sealed-Off Self

In her newfound anger, Sharon proclaimed

I still don't know how I survived it all. I must have had internal resources from somewhere. I couldn't learn anything from my mother directly, but I watched her. I had to become self-sufficient or I'd end up like my father, totally dependent on my mother. My brother escaped the worst of it because he was a boy. He was less easily adaptable by my mother as an extension of her, even in her mind. As a girl I was a patsy. By being the bad part of my mother, my mother reinforced her view of herself as this idealized image. She could never be real. If she said she wasn't angry, she wasn't angry! The reality didn't matter. She continually created the image of who she was. To be angry was bad in her mind, so no matter how enraged she was acting, she was not angry if she believed she wasn't angry! Her denial was total. She created herself as an image every minute. And others got categorized in some totally binary system in her mind. Her mind clicked away like a high-speed computer. Everyone got put in either the good category or the bad category. She would identify with the images of the good. Meanwhile, she could have been totally out of control, ranting and raving at me, accusing me of everything under the sun. Whatever she said to me I was supposed to deserve because I was bad.

Sharon began to reveal a binary thought and image system of her own, which was shocking to her when she became aware of it. She began to tell me, as I listened and understood her anger and helplessness in her relation to her mother, that she continually lived in a world of fantasy images in which she constructed stories about those around her. These stories reinforced Sharon's view of herself as an outsider in a world in which others had exciting and adventurous lives. Like her mother, she dichotomized everyone. For Sharon, everyone became a contrast to her unworthy and dejected self, the orphan child who stood on the outside looking in, tantalized by the imagined world of others from which she was excluded. She began to discover that her fabrications about others were harshly dissonant with the actual reality of what human beings were like.

One scenario that she constructed in her mind concerned a female colleague at work. To Sharon this woman seemed to be a princess, the center of the universe. She always saw this woman as the popular office celebrity because she seemed to be entertaining others in her office all of the time, and she seemed to be socializing with others constantly at lunch. Sharon saw this woman's world as the exact opposite of her own; she drew the black and white comparisons of her binary mental system. Sharon imagined this woman to be in a whole other universe compared to herself in her

degree of happiness and well-being in this life. Sharon's binary system had dictated to Sharon that this colleague was perpetually wanted and adored in a world from which Sharon was excluded. Sharon labeled herself the excluded loner, never stopping to consider that she had actually turned down all lunch invitations when they were offered to her. She had chosen to remain in her office doing work, having a sandwich alone at her desk. Since Sharon did not experience herself as an agent, but felt like a victim in her passive reactive experience of things, her own decision to refuse lunch invitations was denied and dissociated. So when Sharon actually dared to test reality by speaking to her colleague in the office of social parties, she was shocked to be confronted with her female colleague's views about herself and about Sharon. Her colleague, whom we can call Linda, exclaimed that she saw herself as this weak, neurotic, and overly dependent personality who lacked the strength and fortitude to say "no" to a lunch invitation, or to any invitation. She saw Sharon as being an opposite type of personality who had the strength and independence to be her own person, the strength to be self-reliant, and to say "no." Linda saw Sharon as someone who dared to be in control of her life, in contrast to herself. The contrast of Linda's images and stories about Sharon and herself with those of Sharon's about herself and Linda washed over Sharon, rocking the boat of her binary cognitive system. This system had been clicking away as automatically, efficiently, and defensively as had her mother's. Sharon had psychically ingested the blueprint of the binary delusion. Sharon was shocked when confronted with her own failed hypotheses about others. This combined with the shock of her own regret when she realized that she was living in a bubble of her own stereotyped fantasies that kept her far away from others. Sharon also began to realize that she had tried to negotiate her dejected position as an outsider by judging others very critically from an attitude of contempt. This attitude, combined with her emotional unavailability and her naive idealization of certain others, kept her continually at distance from everyone and from her internal, and still highly underdeveloped, true self (Kavaler-Adler, 1992). Realizing this, Sharon began to experience a deep mode of grief that was based on the regret that she had created her own continuing losses in life, as well as her own continuing self-sabotage as she sabotaged relationships with others. Her capacity to feel a deep sense of grief, based on regret, promoted a turning point for her psychic life that became a turning point in her treatment—and a turning point in her marriage and in her life. At this point, Sharon began to attend therapy twice a week and entered a four-hour monthly therapy group that I conducted. Sharon's deepening commitment allowed her to immerse herself in a natural evolution of a "developmental mourning" process (Kavaler-Adler, 1993a, 1996, 2003a, 2003b).

The Turning Point of Regret

Shocked and humbled by her own regret, and now immersed in the crucible of the depressive pain of grief affect, Sharon naturally opened to new insights. These insights were combined with a new sense of self-agency and self-expression. Sharon was also beginning to develop a new sense of interiority, which allowed her to begin to know what she was feeling within. When Sharon realized that she was living in a bubble of her own stereotyped fantasies, far away from others, detached and distancing with a split-off anger in the form of hostile contempt, she first dared to confront her husband, by whom she had become increasingly intimidated (as she had been by her mother). Sharon began to realize that the system of thought she had created around her husband must be as fallacious as that she had woven around the image of Linda. She began to wake up to the fact that she was projecting her own image system-driven hypotheses onto her husband, whose real existence may very well have eluded her. At that time, Sharon's husband was continually enraged at her. In her state of intimidation, brought on by her own projections, Sharon did not dare find out what her husband was really angry about. Until this time of her regret, Sharon also did not dare tell her husband what she was angry at him about. She was filled with the frustration of the wall created when neither she nor her husband could listen to one another. However, until now she had no clue as to how to bypass this wall and reach real communication. Once the bulb of dissonant and informative realities went on in her mind, Sharon was able to get through to her husband. She was able to be penetrated by his communications as well. Sharon's sense of agency came alive at the point of regret, grief, and the recognition of the anger that had been obfuscated by the perpetual sealing off of her psychic image system.

Sharon exclaimed to me at this point:

Suddenly I found myself mourning for all those times in my life when I drove others away and drove happiness away. Because of things from childhood I'm repeating unhappiness over and over again. Usually I don't feel something healing come out of feeling so bad. But I did feel something come out of it. I really feel I was able to say to my husband some things I couldn't say before. I was able to describe to my husband that because I was so shamed and belittled by my mother in my childhood, if my husband is treating me in a way that feels shameful I experience so much rage that I can't listen to him and I can't process the things he's saying. I think he finally heard that. He finally acknowledged it. He finally identified what my hostility is really about. I said to him, "If you're angry about one thing you can't just act it out and displace it onto everything. You can't just dump all this hostility onto me!"

Sharon was amazed that her husband could actually hear her.

The External Object Situation and Off-Target Transference in Marriage

Sharon had been married to her second husband for four years and had had a second child with him. She began to realize that there was a profound alienation growing between her and her husband, which would blow up abruptly into rages. These rages were expressed overtly toward her by her husband, and were expressed internally, within herself, toward her "internal" husband. Sharon kept her own side of the rage very hidden, but it would escape in a split-off behavioral form as nagging, critical comments, and contemptuous judgments that drove her husband mad. These comments and judgments hinted at a whole interior world of warfare, felt subliminally by Sharon's husband as projective-identification operating between Sharon and him. Her husband began to feel like there were hidden land mines in his midst. Ultimately, he told his wife that he believed that she had all these dissociated parts of her that she was out of touch with. Sharon felt devastated when her husband told her this. However, she began to realize that he was right to some extent. She became frightened of how out of control she felt of her own internal life. She felt frightened of what might flare up in any moment from within. Until the moment of her first major experience of regret (that began a mourning process in which grief could begin to be tolerated), Sharon could not feel, differentiate, nor articulate her feelings. All her affects seemed contaminated by explosive impulses. Her first reaction to her husband's confrontation was to be convinced that she did not deserve to be alive. In this state of terror and intimidation she could not speak. She could hardly breathe. No wonder she had hidden and controlled her whole internal life, distancing from her rage as well as her needs, by staying at a distance from most people. She lived in a world of images, an image system, surrounded by image objects (Kavaler-Adler, 1996) and her manic defenses of contempt and evaluating judgments. She had lived in psychic isolation, and in a detached ideation that allowed her to control herself and to indirectly control others through distancing from them. Only in her marriage was Sharon threatened with the breakdown of her controls and of her whole binary image system, in which she and others were either in or out, included or excluded, good or bad, or above or below one another. Sharon had been aware that her mother had such a binary way of categorizing everyone, a binary system in which Sharon was always bad and her mother, who denied all anger even as she expressed it, was stereotypically good. However, it was a shock for Sharon to be confronted with her own similar limited and defensive way of thinking. Sharon learned that her way of thinking had sealed her off contact with others and kept her rigidly navigating in a world of extreme opposite image objects, which she used to define both herself and others. In this image

world, Sharon could not see anybody's point of view but her own. Therefore, when her husband kept complaining to her that she lacked empathy, she felt helpless, paralyzed, and once more accused in a way that her mother had perpetually accused her (and in the way she mentally perpetuated such mental torture).

Although Sharon's husband was projecting much onto her, she was caught up and intimidated by the projections because she was involved in a powerful projective and projective-identification operation of her own. This resulted in a total state of paralysis at times in which Sharon sank into a quagmire of confusion, proclaiming that she had no idea "who was doing what to whom."

When she became consciously angry, Sharon suddenly knew who was doing what to whom (see Winnicott, 1971a). Then she could articulate all the effects she felt her husband's rages and accusations were having on her. She could then make the connection with her internal mother's accusations, which perpetually operated inside of her from the past. Becoming aware of this allowed Sharon to understand that she had been unconsciously addressing her husband from a split-off ("manic," in Kleinian terms) defense position of contempt. She had been inhabiting the split-off mother's place in her own psyche, turning outward her own demonic antilibidinal ego force that most of the time she turned inward on herself. Gradually, Sharon could now sense how her frozen anger had been filtered through this rarefied atmosphere of superiority and contempt. When her anger became hot and her self-agency was regained, Sharon's observing ego began to differentiate all that before seemed so confusing. Then Sharon could speak to her husband of his abusive and uncontrolled displacement of rage frustration onto her. She could also listen to her husband tell her some of the specifics of his own frustration that did relate to her and her behavior, some of which concerned her vulnerability to her ex-husband's manipulations. She could even confront her husband with his manner of relating to her as he had once related to his mother. When Sharon's husband heard and understood her on this point, Sharon was nonplused. She was unable to believe that she could have an impact. As she did begin to comprehend this, her view of herself began to change, despite the projections that her husband would continue to impose on her. Sharon was then able to say things she could never have said to her mother. She was able to be heard in a way she had never been heard by her mother! The next shock was to find out that she had had an impact on me, her analyst, which allowed her to see me in a totally different way. Gradually, Sharon allowed herself to question her views of me, and her curiosity led her to learn that powerful transference distortions combined with the reality of her actual perceptions.

Sharon originally saw me as distant and "professional," implying that I

was as detached from her as she was from others. As she opened to the grief of her regret and opened to her inner life, she found me to be different with her. She was surprised that I could now seem involved, interested, curious, excited, caring, compassionate, confrontational, and warm, as well as arrogant or opinionated. When Sharon commented on this, I could tell her that as she changed by opening up more to me, I could respond in kind, and be more involved and interested in her. Sharon heard this and began to realize that the therapeutic relationship was a relationship, not just a one-way street. She was deeply relieved to see that she could have an impact on another person that was positive, and an impact that brought a process of mutual development and mutual engagement for meaningful work.

Psychic Transformation Through the Grief, Loss and Insight of Regret

When her fantasy system was challenged, Sharon began to see a glimmer of reality that made her, for the first time, feel the awful pain of her loneliness, a loneliness that had existed as an emptiness when numbed out behind a frozen and split-off rage. The sad tale of her childhood loneliness was highlighted by her telling me how she lived as an outsider throughout high school and only survived emotionally by looking forward to seeing the one teacher at school who would say hello to her and would thus seem to validate her existence. The tales of her mother's emotional abuse toward her were told at this time in a detached and distant way, with an attitude of skepticism, cynicism, and disbelief. Without any feeling connection to her mother, having had to shield herself from viewing her mother's craziness as a child, she would mildly protest, even as she revealed tales of horror, "It wasn't so bad!" The true beginning of her change was when she first felt the grief of regret, the pain of a hidden despair emerging behind an emptiness. Prior to this she lived in a false self with a false detachment from her past. Her false self was symbolized by her perfectionistic attachment to her house, a new suburban home that she had insisted that her husband purchase. Winnicott's caretaking false personality can be seen in her caretaking for the inanimate objects of her house at the expense of any connection to her husband or children, at least as her husband saw it. When her husband confronted her she was defensive. When he further proclaimed, however, that she had all these hidden split-off parts that would come out to attack him like he was walking in a mind field, she was in shock.

The Inner Child Opens to Life and to Contact in the Therapy Group

Sharon's experience of regret, and the self-confrontation that followed from this experience, allowed Sharon to begin to relinquish the paranoid

and manic defenses that manifested as attitudes of contempt, detachment, and a guarded cynicism toward her husband and toward herself, as well as in idealized images of others that contrasted with those seen from a position of contempt. Sharon began to get in touch with her anger, a form of healthy and differentiated anger that was not a narcissistic aggression that would lead to regret, but the opposite, a self-assertive anger growing out of the separation-individuation aspects of regret. This allowed her to know "who was doing what to whom," and thus to know what her husband's problems were, separate from hers (Winnicott, 1971a). She could now appropriately confront him, without allowing herself to be used as a scapegoat for his sadistic projections of blame as she had been used by her mother. Nevertheless, as she recovered from being the victim of his sadistic attacks, related to making her own sadistic judgments of herself externalized onto him as her supreme judge, her internal locus of sadistic attack on herself intensified. Sharon's masochistic defenses of self-attack and self-accusation became prominent as she surrendered her surface level of contempt toward her husband (and others) and lessened her empowerment of her husband as the external agent of her own contempt, mixed in with his own, as judgments toward her. As Sharon began to look at herself and see her own faults, she began to see herself less through images of inadequacy, which she contrasted with ideal images of others, and more as someone struggling with daily life. However, her masochistic mode of self-attack in the midst of these struggles was another defense against mourning, particularly the mourning of losses and injuries related to early childhood trauma. After Sharon increased individual treatment to two times a week, which later would become three and then four sessions a week, she also entered a four-hour (with a break), once a month, therapy group, conducted by myself. This was her critical turning point of regret and self-reflection in contemplating her life.

Within the group, Sharon was confronted with her masochistic mode of defense in a profound group experience. Consequently, she was able to experience the emergence of a three-year-old inner child self, which has been repressed and dissociated with early trauma. Her identification with her children as a reflection of the split-off parts of her self was detected in this group experience, and by me, as her psychoanalyst within the group.

When Sharon first entered the group she expected to be hated and excluded, essentially to be treated as the bad child, as she had been treated by her mother. However, rather than turn this into a self-fulfilling prophesy, she was able to talk about her fears in the group. She was greeted by a totally different response than she anticipated. The group not only told her that she came across quite differently than the way she expected, but the people in the group also expressed admiration for her involvement with others in the group, as well as for her capacity to persist in attending the

group despite the awful weight of expectations. Sharon was impressed with this and relieved. Such a confrontation with the distortions in her expectations helped Sharon to disengage from her binary image system, along with the affect level of mourning loss and regret that interacted with such cognitive learning! The disparity of judgments in her head and in reality began to give Sharon some doorway to hope. This doorway opened increasingly wider as Sharon came into contact with the traumatic losses of the past that had left her with the internalized imprint of a victimized child. The confrontation with the perceptions of others, just as with the perceptions of her by her colleague at work, helped Sharon to surrender gradually her primitive binary system of thought, in which she had always seen others in an imagined idealized and exciting life, while seeing herself as a pitiful outcast on the outside looking in.

One particular group session focused entirely on Sharon. This evolved naturally in terms of the dynamics in the group, and in terms of the focus of the group on individual mourning, along with interpersonal relationships, and what they represented. At times, the individual mourning process became the primary focus in the group. In this group session, Sharon was so overwhelmed with distress about her marriage that she let down her defense of self-sufficiency and her isolation of self and affect. She surrendered in a profoundly deep way to receiving help. Every single person in the group responded to her distress and reached out to her with empathy, identifications, confrontations of her self-defeating behavior, reality confrontations, and interpretations of her psychodynamic struggles.

At first, the group members addressed her exaggerated view of her own mistakes in decision making, which was her masochistic self-persecution based on a lifelong pattern of identification with the aggressor, currently related to her husband as the aggressor, and formerly her mother. Sharon started to emotionally open up in the group when she expressed the wish that her husband be proud of her, rather than to constantly criticize her in a harsh, punitive, and judgmental manner, similar to that of her mother in childhood. Sharon revealed the wish for a mother's love from her husband that she never got from her mother. Sharon masochistically defended her husband's blame and punitive attacks, which had reached a paranoid level at the time of this group meeting, by identifying with her husband's judgments of her, which was what she had once done with her mother. Sharon conveyed to the group members that she saw herself as a liability in her marriage, as a partner and as a human being. The group picked up on her masochistic defense and helped her to move into the psychic space of experiencing the three-year-old child within her, seeing her identification with her own three-year-old daughter as her route there.

Some of the group dialogue is as follows:

Alicia: "I could do you so much better on bad decisions. It sounds like you have to be the bad one so your husband can be good. You need to give me a better example of a bad decision than that you've said so far."

Sharon: "I have made bad decisions that my husband doesn't even know."

Alicia: "These mistakes are normal. These things have been blown out of proportion. I had that in a marriage. You have a professional job, a marriage, and two children to be responsible for. You are doing pretty well with all this responsibility. Your husband never gives you any credit. You say your husband can't be proud of you. I'm proud of you. You are expressing things you never could do when you came here. I'm very proud of you and I think it's pathological that your husband can't be proud of you."

Victoria: "Your unexpressed rage is what's making you think you're a horrible person. I really think it's your anger that you're not in touch with that's making you think you're such a terrible person."

Sharon: "Certainly in my family I couldn't express anger."

By connecting her masochistic self-blame with her underlying childhood rage, the group helps her into a vulnerable place of feeling the three-year-old child within her (her libidinal core dominated by the antilibidinal ego or self). Her masochistic defenses, just like her paranoid and manic ones in the contempt position, had defended her against this internal traumatized child self. As she felt the empathy of the group and trusted them, something she never expected to do when she came to the group, she could enter the psychic space of the child within her by entering the image of her three-year-old daughter, moving from her identification with projected image of her daughter, at a level of symbolic representation to the level of core feeling or affect, touching and opening the formerly sealed off libidinal core of her self.

Sharon says to the group: "It is terrifying. My daughter is very attached to my husband. If I become aware of my anger I'm afraid we'll split up the marriage."

Sharon starts to cry. There is absolute silence in the group. "I don't think I could deal with my daughter losing her father." [Crying.] "It's really terrifying!" [her dissociated abandonment experience.]

Myself: "I'm glad you're getting to it, the depth of your grief and pain."

Sharon, crying: "My daughter is three. I don't think she could bear to separate from either one of us. She's a very extraordinary child . . . [crying]. I just can't do anything. It would just crack her world open."

[Crying, crying, sniffing, crying and crying. There is a deep concentrated silence in the group.]

Myself: "You're reexperiencing something you've had inside of you through your daughter. You've lost pride in yourself. Somehow you know what it's like to lose it. So your fear that for your daughter, and anticipate such loss as resulting from the break up of your home".

[I ask her what thoughts are entering her mind just then.]

Sharon: "I can feel a little hope now—at least I can feel. I still feel like I want to run and run and run, as hard as I can."

Myself: "Instead of running you've been mentally pounding yourself until you make yourself unconsciously forgetful."

Diana: "I think it's important that you stay with this level of feeling, not the surface stuff. The surface stuff about bad decisions is really not the issue, even if your husband makes it your issue."

Myself: "That's how she talks to herself inside her mind—as her mother talked to her. This expresses the terror of not being perfect, the fear of losing her mother if she isn't perfect. Sharon demands of herself that she do more than she is capable of, just as her mother did. Sharon is terrified of losing her mother, but now experiences it vicariously (through projective-identification) through her daughter."

Sharon: "You used a term the other day, 'Infantile fear of annihilation.' That's what it is."

Myself: "Sharon, it was after the session when I spoke about the annihilation terror that you forgot a session. You annihilated me to avoid feeling this terror for yourself. I can take it." [Laughter in the group.]

Victoria: "She can take it!"

Alicia: "She can take it. She's endlessly annihilated." [Laughter throughout the group.]

Male coleader: "She deserves nothing less!" [Laughter.]

Lillian: "cut off his head." [Laughter and then quiet.]

Sharon: "I don't understand it. You're telling me I can annihilate Susan."

Myself: "It's to annihilate the fear of annihilation and to annihilate the awareness of how profound this terror is, and annihilating the awareness that I touched you in this place, even though you didn't allow yourself to feel it emotionally."

Diana: "I understand how terrifying it would be to make a decision about your daughter."

Myself: "What were you just thinking Sharon?"

Sharon: "I was thinking that my daughter is too little to be out there by herself."

Myself: "Hmm. Like in the park when you were three or four, when you were left behind."

Sharon: "I don't want to be separated from my daughter."

[Crying.] "We'd have to decide. It would be a terribly painful decision."

Myself: "When you said you were left at three in the park by your mother, all alone, you are saying you were small, three or four, like your daughter is now. You identify with her because she represents the child living within you, who has been traumatized. It sounds to me like your daughter would be left alone now, just like you were. Your daughter is three. You had to find your way home from the park at three or four."

Sharon: "My brother got me home. My mother went to the super market. I thought she wasn't coming back. I guess time was much longer to us than to her [Crying] . . . so we walked home . . . crying. We didn't know how to get there. It was trial and error to get home. We got home this way and that. When

we got home my mother started screaming at me and hitting me for leaving the place she had left us." [Crying.]

[We could all sense that something died inside of Sharon at that moment. Yet she was dependent on her mother and had to blame herself to protect her mother.]

Gloria: "So you'll be able to make it home now."

Sharon: "I don't know where that is."

Myself: "That's what's so terrifying."

Gloria: "Inside of yourself. You are doing that now."

Sharon: "I'm pulling my sled behind me now. I'm pulling my two kids. I have to get them somewhere too. [Crying—sniffling, as Sharon relives the trauma of losing her mother in the catastrophe of dragging her sled home in the snow and cold when lost in the park at three years old.]

Victoria: "I think it's so good you've opened up here. You don't have to make any decisions now. You just have to stay with what you feel. This is your internal three-year-old. The more you get in touch with how you felt abandoned, by experiencing your internal three year old, as you continue to work through the pain, you're going to be able to figure out what to do with your marriage and children. Everything else will fall into place as you continue to get in touch with your three-year-old."

Lillian: "I think it's great that you're sharing this."

Sharon: "I have the whole group's help today! I feel very fortunate that everyone here has reached out to me and I want to thank everybody. [Crying.] I really have felt nurtured here in a way that I haven't felt for a long time. I don't just see my husband as a monster."

[Responding to a comment of Lillian's] Diana: "I don't think it's you making the monster. I mean it's the group."

Male coleader: "At the same time, Sharon you don't want to get comfortable taking this kind of behavior toward you."

Victoria: "And I think your husband has been financially supportive and taking care of. You've experienced these other qualities in him. I'm sure he has these qualities. But given that it's been this way for a long time and Sharon feels terrible about herself, there's a dynamic between two people."

Sharon: "He used to be empathic with me as well as to others. He used to be that way with me, but things evolved."

Diana: "I'd like to stay with this. I see your lack of self-esteem plays into this."

Sharon: "In the beginning with my husband I presented myself as a needy person, and he liked this because he was a person who liked to help. Unfortunately, it got to a place where we're using each other. Our marriage was bringing out old issues for both of us. For me, I continue to see myself as incompetent, stupid, and needy. Someone else had to make decisions for me. It backfired. He started getting resentful of this role had had chosen. He got very angry. He started wanting not be in that role anymore. He wanted a partner and I wasn't being a partner. In hindsight you can say, if only we had not started out that way."

Victoria: "He wanted to change the rules?"

Sharon: "He was never married before. He was thirty-six when we met and thirty-eight when we married. I don't think he had any idea what his needs were. Only when we got married and had a child did he realize he had needs. I think he did change the rules-not in a malicious way. He's been getting in touch with his own needs."

Victoria: "But he couldn't talk about that."

Sharon: "No. I didn't realize the rules had been changing."

Sharon's Development After the Group Breakthrough Meeting: The Growth of Self-Agency as Regret is Worked Through

Once Sharon got in touch with her inner child (Fairbairn's dissociated libidinal ego, 1952, which has been reintegrated into the central self through the emotional experience of it in therapeutic regression), she was more capable of feeling the pain of others and of her husband. This allowed Sharon to use her original sense of regret to promote empathy. The result has been that, despite the severe conflict between her and her husband at that time of the critical group meeting, the marriage was turning around. Meaningful communication was developing and continuing between Sharon and her husband. For this to happen, Sharon has needed to emotionally separate from her husband (to avoid actual separation), which she has done with the help of her individual treatment that has been three times a week for several years now. Sharon has needed to see her husband's psychological problems realistically. She has needed to mourn her image of her husband as an idealized parent who would take over for her in her adult responsibilities to make decisions, and her image of him as an omniscient judge. When Sharon set her husband up to judge her, he turned demonic in her mind. In this way, Sharon lost her own judgment and gave her husband (the mother displacement) too much power. She lost her emotional center, which she began to connect to when she found her inner child in the group. The inner child needs psychic space and interpersonal contact to grow up. It is arrested when intimidated by projected judgments. Sharon had been asking her husband to possess her through evaluating her and judging her, since she had failed to have faith in herself to judge herself and had failed to trust her own intuition and competence. Sharon's capacity to face her regrets has enabled her to see all aspects of her life clearly and to have a new sense of self-agency. This newfound self-agency has helped Sharon to feel a new sense of competence.

Two Treatment Sessions on Working Through Regret

Two sessions in the 8th year of her treatment illustrate Sharon's intensive working with the grief of her regret, and therefore with the developmental

transformations in character structure that come with working through of regret. I quote some of the dialogue from both sessions.

Sharon: "I realize that the last couple of weeks I've been in a very contemptuous state."

Myself: "Maybe you're becoming more aware of such a state because of our last discussion about your contempt for one of the group members. We spoke of how difficult it was to contain the feeling, which made you feel like pulling back from the group."

Sharon: "There's a woman at work, who has been coming by my office. She started to annoy me. I felt she was intrusive, coming by so often, sitting down, and chattering away. I started feeling this rage build up. I guess it was contempt. I kept thinking 'Why is she sitting there going on and on about nothing.' I guess I was contemptuous and she must have felt it. She stopped coming by. At first I told myself that I was relieved. But then I felt badly, especially after our talk about the group and my contempt there building up secretly. I tried to make amends. I push people away by acting nasty. I think I blew it. There had been a budding friendship."

Myself: "You seem to feel regret."

Sharon: "I feel overwhelmed. I've been realizing my contempt and it feels overwhelming. I feel bad. She is the one friend I made in the office. I've been pushing her away because she chatters. Surely there's a better way of dealing with someone who likes to chatter even if I don't. She's so unlike me. She really makes contact with so many people by chattering. The results are she has many more contacts in the office and outside of it than I do. I should probably learn from her rather than getting angry. I'm wondering if I can make it up to her or is it too late?"

Myself: "Why should it be too late?"

Sharon: "Maybe she's written me off because she's realized I am really not a very fun person."

"I'm dour and serious, not playful the way she is." I'm always worried about something, always a problem not fun." [Later, this view of me as the creative and fun one, with her as the dour one, came out in the transference, and could be interpreted as her projecting her idealized self and her potential self onto me.]

Myself: "You're projecting onto her your own way of making quick, black-and-white harsh judgments. She could think some of these things, but you think in condemning quick rejecting judgments, so you think she is thinking that way."

Sharon: "You're probably right. She probably just thinks I need more space and she's giving it to me. Most people don't operate like I imagine. I see that I'm contemptuous with my husband too. I see his defects and dissociate myself from him, like recently at his brother's house, so that I don't get identified with his defects. As I look at this behavior in myself it looks pretty ugly—to attack people I like just because other people might have had something negative to say to them or about them. At my husband's brother's house, I dissociated from my husband. I told little anecdotes, putting my husband down when he wasn't

there. I was even dissociating myself from my husband with the T.V. repairman [her shame]. I had to tell him that I didn't watch T.V., as opposed to my husband. Only my husband would engage in such contemptible activities, I implied, to the T.V. repairman. What does he care? It's ridiculous! I'm identifying with my mother, who had contempt for those who watch T.V. I'm trying not to be the victim of her contempt by being the contemptuous one."

Myself: "You're always trying to justify yourself by putting someone down. At home, it's your husband or son. In the group it's been Lisa who you put down inside your head."

Sharon: "I wish she would leave. I hate being in this state of contempt, and it goes on automatically inside of me. It's hard not to act it out and blurt out my thoughts. It's hard and painful to sit there with it. I don't want to say, 'That's moronic. If those cats are making you sick, you get rid of the cats.'"

Myself: "Is that how your mother spoke to you?"

Sharon: "Much more biting sarcasm: always saying, 'What's wrong with you!' I don't ever speak to Lisa. She seems so passive, letting things pass over her. She doesn't want to make a choice or decision. She's indecisive. I think she's a hundred times worse than I am in my indecisiveness, which I hate in myself. It drives me crazy to listen to her, like my friend in the office. I guess I made that woman disappear. Then I'm left sitting all by myself. That's not what I want. Part of me wants that, but part of me really doesn't [Need/Fear Dilemma] When people try to get close to me I push them away."

Myself: "There are two sides of the bind. You fear isolation, but nobody is good enough. You start seeing people's defects, think they're terrible, and then want to discard them."

Sharon: "Yes. When I have the idea of having more social contacts, it's all in the realm of fantasy. I have a big party in my mind, but then in reality I'm pushing people away. My fantasy reflects what I wish I had, a large group of really close friends. [Sharon had felt like she had friends for a period of time in the group, at the point when she had opened and let people help her. Then, however, she built up contempt afterwards, thinking sarcastically that she duped them into seeing her as a victim. She pushed them away in her mind.] There's a reason my husband has so much involvement with family and friends. He admits he needs people and makes it a priority. For me, it's something to be ashamed of. I'm just looking at the irony of it, wishing and wishing to have friends and then feeling contempt for people. It makes me think of Groucho Marx saying: 'I wouldn't join a club that would have me as a member.'"

Myself: "Woody Allen also said that."

Sharon: "I'm sorry. Groucho said it first. Woody Allen isn't original." [Sharon shows a new capacity for play here.]

Myself: "Woody Allen was just quoting Groucho Marx and acknowledging him. Now you're having contempt for Woody Allen."

Sharon: [laughs]. No wonder I'm stuck! I'm in the contempt mode. It's hard to feel creative or happy when I'm busy feeling contempt. I guess I could try to make amends with this woman at work. I could ask her to have lunch with me. I could talk to her. I should do that." I can see now that I'm not just

depressed. I'm feeling overwhelmed with contempt." [fear of closeness in the schizoid, getting contaminated with contemptible defects of others.]

Myself: "It's good that you can see it. It's very important." [with Sharon the contempt is often off target transference—toward husband and group members. In the initial transference in treatment she had idealized me and imagined me as being contemptuous of her. Her contempt for me comes out in her anger at times, but she is able to express her anger toward me, which she was not in the beginning of treatment. Such expression modifies her contempt and helps her to see another's point of view]

Sharon: "This is very basic stuff about what I do. I have to start looking at it, but I don't like it. I don't like looking at it. I don't know how I can get rid of it."

Myself: "You are in the process of awareness that can lead to change. Talking about it, and feeling bad in relation to regret is the beginning of change."

Sharon: "Talking about this makes me feel really depressed—not the fake depression of self-contempt, but real regret. [grief] I've let my contempt run me. I've let it take over."

Myself: "That's the big regret."

Sharon: "I've let it run rampant. The only way I know how to deal with it is to do what I did with Lisa, which is to sit on it as tightly as I can. Then I feel like I'm going to explode."

In the next session, Sharon experiences and explores another form of regret, which allows her to feel the grief related to hurting her husband and family by repeating her victimized child position, which is related to the past with her mother. Behind the regret of her own weakness related to having been continually intimidated by a sadistic bully, who she in part creates in an abusive other, is the insight about her own repetition of the victimized reactive child who was so intimidated by the mother of her childhood who truly was a bully and who she internalized as such. Just as in the previous session, when Sharon felt the regret about the repetition of her mother's contemptuous behavior, as in identifying with the aggressor, in this session she is feeling the other side of such repetition, the side of identifying with the victimized child self that was continually intimidated by the aggressor (sadistic) part of her mother. She goes beyond a realization of her anger at her mother and the displacement of her mother in her husband, and takes the grief endowed responsibility for her own behavior. She speaks of "perpetuating" her own pathological (the childhood defensive stance) behavior and the pain of regret that she feels for this. Thus, in this session we can see another example of the painstaking road to consciousness that manifests in the working through of the depressive position. Sharon herself distinguishes the grief of her regret and the realization that reparation cannot undo the past ("true reparation" versus "manic reparation" in Klein's vocabulary) from the compulsive and defensive repetition

of masochistic submission and masochistic self-blame and self-contempt. She realizes that she continues to create a bogeyman (an omnipotent sadistic other) in order to preserve her own powerless and hopeless child position. This position has become a powerful psychic habit, which keeps Sharon in the old attachment to her childhood mother, now being played out with her ex-husband and also with her current husband.

The session proceeds as follows:

Sharon: "I don't know what to talk about, which probably means I'm reluctant to talk. [Then she starts to cry and continues.] My husband blew up again. My son is in a band at school and for three years he has been renting a clarinet. My husband was set on edge when he heard I'd been paying the whole rental fee for the clarinet and that my ex-husband wasn't paying anything. He said to me that he could have bet that I would never bring this up with my ex-husband for the same reason I had never demanded real child support from my ex-husband until recently, when I went to litigation, but only after my husband challenged me on that. I had made up excuses in my own mind about paying for the clarinet, pretending it wasn't important. My husband was really tormented that I let this happen without any reason. My parents believed you don't spend money on anything. You don't spend money on clothes, vacations, or anything. In my husband's family they think it's fine to spend money on yourself-for pleasure. It took me a really long time to see how one could spend money on pleasure if you have the money. I was taught not to spend money. But when I spend money on something I don't have to spend money on it drives my husband crazy! He actually used the word 'infidelity' in describing my spending money on something rather than confronting my ex-husband with his responsibility. After this I talked to my ex-husband. I couldn't get him to pay for the back money for the clarinet. He always has a story and excuse. He doesn't save a dime. I let that one thing linger on for no reason—for basically the same reason I didn't confront my ex-husband in the first place—I don't want to deal with him. It's easier to swallow it. I act like I have no power. I'm just a helpless child victim and these people all have the power. I can't deal with him! I put off dealing with my ex-husband for years, thinking he'll just lie anyway. It's the same as my not having the guts to tell my mother about the bar mitzvah arrangements for my son. I know I turned my mother into a monster, and my husband, and my ex-husband. I think I have to have ruthless monsters in my life, who have all the power-and I have no power. *How* to change it is another matter. I also thought that if I confront my ex-husband and upset him I fear he'd wield his power and take my son away from me. I've seen now, with the litigation, that my ex-husband doesn't have much power. I have more. I have knowledge, articulation, and determination. He cries, whines, and manipulates—but when that fails he caves in. He's a bully and my mother's a bully. He doesn't even want my son to live with him."

Myself: "You only see now that you created this whole monster." [In the depressive position, Sharon can take this interpretation. In Thomas Ogden's (1986) words, she has become "an interpreting subject".]

Sharon: "I can see why my husband looks on this with such disdain. It did hurt our family that I didn't stand up to my ex-husband. I would let my ex-husband do whatever he wanted, and I couldn't explain why I needed to hang onto that crazy relationship with him, as if I was still married to him, instead of choosing the person I was married to. When my husband confronted me I called my ex-husband. My husband felt so betrayed, for everything from the past with my ex-husband, which was all represented to him by my paying for the clarinet. I can understand how he felt. I just feel really bad. Why didn't I think of it. I was intimidated by my bogeyman."

Myself: "Intimidated by your own bogeyman."

Sharon: "I do it with my husband, too. You know what happened for a long time. I had no awareness of my own patterns of behavior that were driving my husband crazy. When he'd get upset it would seem to come out the blue. So I developed this image of my husband as someone crazy and irrational who could be set off any time. So I have to pussy foot around and hid things. Now I realize he was overreacting, but he was reacting to real things that I wasn't aware of. I'm still reacting to him like he's an all-powerful intimidating bogeyman. If I had ever told my mother that she had anything wrong she would go crazy! With my mother there was no way of predicting her reaction and what violence might occur. I felt completely powerless. It could be anything that would drive her into a rage. I just got into the habit of walking around on eggshells. I would withdraw into trying to be so good and doing everything right. I got into the habit of being this totally hopeless victim, and you know that doesn't work in a marriage. So I guess I'm feeling a lot of regrets. I'm regretting I spent so much time being manipulated by my husband because I couldn't separate out my husband from my mother. I'm really regretting what it's done to my marriage. I don't know how much can be repaired. I know I'm changing, but I can't undo what I've done. I can't take away the hurt that that caused my husband. I can't! I'm not really feeling depressed. I'm just feeling very sad and full of regrets! That's about the size of it. That's how I'm feeling. I'm not saying I'm a worthless human being. I'm saying I've done a lot of damage."

Myself: "You're distinguishing the reality from your fantasy of others in your projected images. Your sadness is not depression. Depression is based on defensive warding-off of feeling. Your sadness is real. It's the grief that tells you what's real. When you were saying you were worthless it was just another defense and it made you feel depressed. You're not doing that now. You're in touch with the sadness that brings insight in an organic way."

Regrets for Her Aggression in the Family of the Present

Throughout the course of Sharon's treatment, her despair and binary system were punctured and penetrated by the grief of regret. Turning points in her mind and in her life seemed to occur around these points of critical regret. A more differentiated form of anger and love opened with regret. Although a clinician often sees the capacity for regret following from primi-

tive aggression made conscious, it works the other way around as well, as this case demonstrates. The capacity for regret can open a more refined form of aggression, a newly emerging object-related anger, one most vivid in Sharon's marriage at this time, but complemented by her anger toward me in the transference. She could call me on specific things now that irked her. She became quite articulate in her review of my conduct, for example, telling me how I was arrogant toward insurance companies or toward her husband's former therapist, or was arrogant about my views on medication. A new sense of agency, a new sense of interiority, a new budding sense of femininity, and a new sense of compassion and empathy emerged through the crucible of grief, object-related in the form of regret.

There were several sessions after the ones reported on the topic of regret when Sharon continued to actively struggle with an almost annihilating terror that turned to grief and loss concerning her view of her own damaging effects on her husband and children. In these sessions, Sharon focused on how her tendencies toward split-off contempt, symptomatic of her childhood defense system of dissociation in the service of self-protection, were triggering off fights at home, creating splits between her present husband and her son, or between her husband and herself. She would sound despairing when discussing this. "What good does it do to be aware of it?" she would challenge me. When I suggested that her awareness could offer her the chance to choose change, she would at first sound nonplussed and a bit contemptuous of me for my lack of "concrete" help. "You always say that!" she would protest. "I feel awful! I can't undo what I've done!" I would empathize with the loss she felt and would understand that it was a horrible feeling to not only see the damage in her family that she contributed to, but to also see herself as the damaging one. When she was in the paranoid schizoid position, it had been much easier to see her mother as the source of all damage, or to just see her husband's damaging ways as he erupted in rages and blamed her for everything, as her mother had. Now that a mourning process had brought her into the depressive position with all the capacities to feel for the subjectivity of the other, and to feel her own agency as responsible for hurting the ones she loved, life became much more complex. Life also became more colorful, however as affects mixed all elements of pain, loss, longing, and anger, which was so easy to turn against oneself to avoid the feeling of grief.

Sharon wondered if this wasn't just an awful exercise in pain, because she didn't see how feeling so miserable could be a sign of hope. She could see no way, at that moment, for "doing something" that would make undoing (manic reparation) possible, while the frail reality of true reparation paled by comparison in her mind! Despite her anxious and angry questioning, Sharon was open to a totally new and hopeful state of mind by the

next session. She would begin by reporting how much better things were going for her and for her family. She would then tell me that she was able to listen to her husband's attacks, innuendoes, and overt accusations in a totally different state of mind now. She realized that when he was having a tantrum and using her as a scapegoat, he was just having a tantrum. It was not really about her. Sharon could see when her husband used her as a displacement for his rage. Yet sometimes she would distinguish that his overreaction was a response to something she had really done and to his interpretation of it. Sharon became much more objective about her husband's behavior. Consequently, her husband stopped attacking her as much. He started openly confiding in her. He sensed her growing sense of competence. He then became less irritated by Sharon's tentative and intimidated ways, on the one hand, which made her very indecisive, and by her sarcastic and contemptuous judgments on the other hand. Once Sharon felt the grief of her regrets, she became conscious of both her self-effacing intimidation, with the secretiveness and hidden withdrawals that went with it, and of the self-righteous, self-virtuous, false self, and grandiose attacks of contempt on her husband (as her mother had assaulted her with spars of sarcasm).

Everything in her family changed because of this. Her family began to enjoy going on vacations together as a unit, having bar mitzvah for her son as a unit, and feeling the warmth of sustained connections.

For the first time her son and her husband developed a caring relationship for each other. Then, her son began to separate from a pathological narcissistic symbiosis with his biological father, developing more mature and related relationship with both men.

Regrets for Daddy

Sharon had always portrayed her father as a passive wimp ghost in the background of her childhood and of her mind. When she first came to treatment, she told me that she had rejections of plays she wrote because her view of men was so caricatured and lifeless due to her (part object) view of her father. Her view of her father began to come alive and form into a more whole object picture in treatment.

The passive wimp became a withholding bastard and a frustrated victim of the mental health establishment of the time, which hospitalized him. He became a live figure on which to bestow her hate. He became the detached and obscure figure, writing her long, endless descriptions in letters. Her father's letters failed to relate to Sharon at all. They seemed like a desperate attempt to express himself, but only in the form of observations on endless and disjointed details of life. Her resentment flared up. Her criticisms broke

forth from the dissociated cubicles of her mind from which they had been stored and projected.

Then there was one crystalline session of paradoxical dramas reformulating in her mind. It had a dramatic and trenchant affective impact on her and I both. We became joined by a new daddy relationship from the interior space behind the former curtains in her mind. Her core connections to an early daddy were refound like the discovery of the Rosetta stone. The self that could only survive through heart connections emerged as never before.

The session is memorable for its dialectical poles of hate and love, spinning around a father object who had been coming increasingly to life, as part object forms come into whole object forms as the self and psyche integrate. By the midpoint of the session, Sharon was recalling the hate for a father who epitomized all the forms of failing her that left her feeling alone and in orbit in the world—as if she had been a “changeling” (Sharon’s association) dropped arbitrarily into a family system that seemed totally detached and strangely alien to her, where she also felt like an alien. Sharon spoke of a rage coming awake from her unconscious, where it had been split off and dissociated, a rage that made her feel like she had been on fire with hot wires of hate streaming through her entire body. Her images revived my memories of Edith Sitwell’s poetry, as the British poet had spoken of being a bush of flames on fire in relation to her own father (“father-mother,” as intrapsychic fantasy “demon lover” (Kavaler-Adler, 1993a, 1996). She recalled her father’s letters to her at camp with a sense of nauseous disdain, suffering the thoughts of how out of touch her father was with any center of being—either hers or his. She hated him for his letters. She hated him for his inert passive dependence on her mother, for his invalid status, for his lack of any kind of agency at all in her view, for his pleading, hurt-filled eyes that left her guilt-ridden, when his eyes were not oblivious and totally detached. She hated him for his lack of awareness of her scapegoat status with an out of control sadistic and martyred mother.

There was hate, hate, hate! Then suddenly something erupted from another plain as a new regret consumed her. Her syncopated memory jumped forward from childhood to her adulthood, as she recalled how he had written to her, asking to see her, saying it might be the last time they saw each other. With this thought Sharon started to cry in great gulps of pain that was different from other times of silent weeping. “He knew he was going to die,” she said. “I didn’t believe him. I wrote him back a snide, contemptuous, and dismissive letter, saying of course we’d see each other again! I can feel the sneer in the letter now. I was the cold, detached, sadistic one then, not he, not her. I was the metallic object, the unfeeling stone. I never saw him again.” As she said this, Sharon doubly erupted in an agony of

grief. She gasped to breathe as her tears flooded her and washed out the hot wires of hate that had possessed her, as all bad objects possess those that cannot love. A new level of memory entered the door of my consultation room, a level of memory that neither of us had witnessed before. She remembered an early daddy that she had kept immured in the darkness of her mental closet up until that very moment. He was a daddy who she now, in this very moment, believed had truly loved her. "I never believed that my mother loved me," she said, "but I always knew my father had loved me. I forgot it, all of it, the daddy who loved me, the daddy I loved." Her tears washed her eyes red, and I could only see them when she got up from the couch at the end of the session. "I was so mean. I turned my heart cold. No wonder my first marriage failed and I almost destroyed my second marriage." As her analyst, I felt the poignancy of the moment, her heart crying out to me with her newfound capacity to love. We had discovered her daddy. I wanted to sing as her grief washed us up on the raft of her core self, embedded in a barbed wire ego that could now surrender to love and to life! When she left the session that day we both knew that change could definitely happen. "He really loved me," she repeated. "That's why you've been able to love your daughter," I said, "despite your fears that you could never love, especially a daughter." She nodded her head in agreement. We had a silent moment of communion. "The part of you that knew beyond your conscious ignorance that you were loved by your daddy found your daughter. That's why she's as healthy as you and as sociable and self-confident. It hasn't all been your husband's doing." Seeing her father as a vulnerable being has allowed Sharon to dream, a dream of a vulnerable mother with hurt in her eyes. The new image of her mother, allowing her to see the child in her mother, has allowed her to relinquish the image of her mother as a monster. In relinquishing that primal object image, she has been able to lessen her compulsive tendency to demonize the world through the projection of this internal primal image.

The Growth of Gratitude Through the Feeling of Loss

As Sharon became increasingly attuned to free associative thinking, with the gradual letting go of old object ties through mourning and regret, she opened her imagination in the moment to images that emerge naturally from within. Sometimes these images were projected onto a painting in my room, which she used as a Rorschach (admittedly, in her view). Sometimes they were stimulated merely by thoughts, interpersonal events, or in some cases by other stimuli in the room that she projected onto. How different this was from the woman who first came to treatment, who could only have fantasies in nightmarish dreams! During one session, following her grief for

her father, Sharon looked at the certificates I had on the wall of my downtown Manhattan office where I had framed some of my educational certificates. She remarked quite spontaneously that she had just had the fantasy of people coming into my office to collect my things, as my certificates after my death.

Distinctly not interpreting this as her wanting to kill me off, I listened to hear the story that followed and its affect, that of grief. She said that she felt quite sad as she envisioned this scene. She said that she feared losing me, that she was aware now that to lose me would be a great personal loss for her. I had become valuable to her, not only as a psychoanalyst but as a person she cared about, and to one she felt gratitude.

Then, as she followed her line of free association, she found that she might be imagining my death to avoid thinking about her husband's death. Then she realized that the thought had entered her mind, and the fear had entered her whole psycho-physical being that her husband could die from a heart attack from what he was taking on the following year, in terms of responsibilities in both work and in field work in his new graduate studies. As she thought of this, she began to think of all the things her husband did for her. She began to enumerate all these things and to feel how much she could now appreciate her husband and feel gratitude toward him. She mentioned how he took care of the pool at their home, did things in the house, and how he also provided a "reality check" for her, validating what was real for her, when she still felt insecure about her perception of reality. She spoke with a great feeling of grief and longing, with a whole new sense of how awareness of losing another could heighten an awareness of love, not just love due to need, but love mixed in with need that existed for its own sake beyond the need. She followed associations as visions in her mind and spoke of how she now for the first time was seeing the end of everything in her marriage, not as due to a prospective divorce, but as due to the potential death of her husband. This came after she was beginning to imagine a lifetime with him and to feel a sense of their working things out together and being together. Her capacity to mourn a potential loss allowed her to feel the reality of a present love that she had never fully appreciated before. The woman with the formerly detached intellect became poetic.

During the next day's session Sharon saw a new image in her "Rorschach painting." Instead of the usual monsters she had seen earlier on, or the princess that she had found in the painting later on—as the transference changed and as her view of her self changed—she saw a metallic head. However, she not only saw the metallic head, she also experienced the projective act itself in seeing the image, the visceral transmission that can come from projective-identification as opposed to a mere mental projection

at a representational and symbolic level. She spoke about it in terms of feeling release of pressure as she “put the metallic head outside myself.” She spoke of the metallic head as having power, but also a rigidity that she was glad to get rid of, to get outside of her body and mind.

It was as if she was experiencing the unburdening of her primitive mind’s binary system of cognitive thought in both concrete and metaphoric terms simultaneously. I felt her visible relief. I was also fascinated by her fascination with this metallic object that she saw as a face, but really as a mask, conjuring up palpable images of false self in robot-like terms. I was reminded of other patients with schizoid (or paranoid-schizoid) character structures who had metallic objects (or part objects) to which they were adhesively attached. They had metallic objects that lived within them, in the sealed-off and split-off infant part of them as remnants of a primitive mother. The original external mother usually had a schizoid character. I was also reminded of Tustin’s (1990) work on autistic children, who would cling to hard objects, who resembled the original sealed-off mother object. These children would organize around the cold hard other, rather than around a warm and yielding mother.

Then Sharon proclaimed that she believed this metal face could have the power to finish writing her children’s book, which she had put aside and not returned to, despite the editorial praise and encouragement she received. She said that she herself could not do so. Interestingly enough, in the very next session, she suddenly found her own feeling of agency in relation to her book.

She wondered how this had happened. She noted that in the last session she felt helpless to finish the book and saw the metallic object as an external source of creative power, not sensing any internal source of such power. How had she transformed into her own sense of self-agency she wondered? It was clear to me. One does not truly get rid of a part of the self in projective identification. Whatever is put outside can and does return to the inside through introjective-identification. Not only did Sharon feel a new sense of agency to finish her own creative work, but she also could tell me in detail her specific plan of strategic attack on her book. She could also tell me a definite timetable that she had set up for the work. She had reowned the power she projected outside, but had left the heavy burden of the metallic object attached to this power outside herself. Her power had become more flexible and resilient, like a muscle that could work at will, without much effort, rather than like a machine she had to crank up on an assembly line. As Sharon left my office, on the day when she imagined my certificates to be collected by those clearing up after my death, she had another vision of the certificates. After her grief and love experience in the session, she said that she “felt warmth coming off the certificates.” I was

amused by her indirectness, still resisting direct contact or direct gratitude in my presence. I commented that if she experienced my certificates as warm it must mean that she felt me as being warm then, which was quite different than how she had imagined me for many years. She laughed and agreed with me, enjoying that I called her on her evasion of direct acknowledgment, and thus of direct love, by interpreting her displacement and projection.

Relinquishing the "Perfect People"

How did this interact with her readiness to give up the fantasy of the "perfect people," and of the "perfect person" to which she wanted to attach herself to? She had always projected not only her power but her talents, skills, and capacities to love and create out onto her fantasy perfect people. She had imbued her imagined "perfect people" with all the strength, intellect, elegance, and interpersonal skills that she viewed herself as lacking. Then she fantasized being attached to the perfect people, becoming an extension of them through compliance and submission. She could then imagine sharing in their perfection and escaping the inferior status that she believed had been her birthright.

The first perfect person had been her brother. He was a brilliant student who entered MIT at sixteen, escaping the family household. When her brother left, Sharon was decimated. She had believed that he would be her salvation, since she had not trust for either one of her parents. She had made up a fantasy brother who would feel as involved with her as she was with him. So when her brother left abruptly, according to a plan he had calculated long ago, she was shocked. Her fantasy of his involvement with her was totally dispelled, and the impact of the shock rocked her.

Her current and second husband would become the heir to this fantasy throne. At the initiation of her relationship with him she believed that he had all the qualities and strengths (such as having a lot of friends and related parents) that she lacked. Therefore, her second husband became the new perfect person in her mind.

The idea of giving up the fantasy of the perfect people caused Sharon much pain. She had protected herself from the awareness of her traumatized and despairing status by investing in the fantasy of the world being inhabited with perfect people who had perfect lives. If she was the only inferior being, she could tolerate life as long as the others had everything that she lacked. Like the unconscious thinking of Fairbairn's (1952) deprived child, who thought that "It is better to be a devil in a world ruled by God than an angel in a world ruled by Satan," Sharon could have hope for survival in a world where the perfect people ruled and she could attach

herself to them. Such fantasy protected her from consciously contemplating the horrors of her childhood life: as the daughter of a mother who became a witch or monster or monster in her mind, as the mother had assaulted her in a continuous sadistic and scapegoating attacks, and as the daughter of a father who became a vegetable after numerous psychiatric hospitalizations.

As the delusional system came into Sharon's awareness, she was faced with her beliefs being mere fantasies. This helped her piece together the elements of her actual reality. In Ogden's words (1986), she became an "interpreting subject," one who could now tell that thoughts and feelings were thoughts and feelings, not actual events. To know a fantasy is a fantasy is a critical part of entering Klein's depressive position. The grief of regret had helped Sharon arrive in this psychic place.

CONCLUSION

Feeling and Mourning the Inner Child: An Interaction with the Mourning of Regret

As Sharon located her internal traumatized child self, she was able to lessen the compulsive defensive operations that isolated her from others and that kept her vicious pathological cycles going. These pathological cycles could be referred to as repetition compulsions; they could also be seen as major defense systems that warded off her affect life. Through such defense systems, she had avoided the painful affect states related to her early abuse and abandonment. These defense systems warded off the critical affects of loss, but also the affects of rage and emptiness and void states (see Masterson, 1981, on abandonment depression affects). In one defense she was identifying with the aggressor and enacting her mother's sadistic attitudes and attacks on the other, often her husband, or was doing so in her mind if not in behavior. In another she was identified with her mother's victimization and with her own role of victim in relation to the mother. In that position, she felt helpless and inadequate and projected all her power outside of herself into the sadistic other.

Both operations could clearly be seen to operate with her husband, but they occurred with others as well. However, when she could experience the pain of regret and the cognitive accompaniment of interpreting that which she was regretting, she was able to relinquish some of her sadism and the maternal identification that went with it. Then she was able to relinquish her masochistic self-attack in a victimized position and the maternal and paternal identifications that went with that. Bit by bit, as she spoke to me quite spontaneously about her regrets, she lessened the wish to mimic her mother's form of sadistic power, either in directing it outward

as identification with the aggressor or in directing it inwards as identification with the aggressor (Fairbairn's "antilibidinal ego") in an attack on her internal child self. However, to give up this false power, based on pathological identifications, she had to feel the traumatized child self through memory and reliving. She felt this at first in the group experience, where she first contacted the inner three-year-old through projecting the dissociated child self onto her daughter. Contacting this inner core—that which Fairbairn (1952) would call the split-off libidinal ego—both was painful and yet relieving! In feeling the three-year-old within, she felt alive in a new way, experiencing a true and authentic affect self (Winnicott, 1971b), with its spontaneity. She felt both grief and longing. She felt the grief of losing the old tie to her mother who punished and abandoned her by separating from her through the owning of her own experience, and the longing of wishing to unite with a better mother.

Later in treatment she would still be haunted by her expectation of punishment, which at times could seem like a wish. She would speak of looking for a punishment, deprivation, or rejection after any experience of pleasure and fulfillment. For example, after the triumphant success of her son's bar mitzvah, which she had planned and seen through, bringing the whole family together, and a new world of friends and family together with her, she felt anxiety. For the first time, she not only tolerated a position of being a center of attention, which in the past would have filled her with tension and made her push people away, but she actually enjoyed this position for the first time! Yet right afterward, her psychoanalytic therapy sessions were spent talking about how she was expecting "the other shoe to drop." She could create a whole new state of tension by looking for the punishment. She had never had a parental model for feeling that she could deserve either success or pleasure.

Yet, as she talked about a feared punishment that never came, for the first time she did not create it. She spoke about a compulsion to create it instead, and also about compulsion to pull back from a new mother, the one in her middle-aged adult life, who for the first time was not rejecting her. At her son's bar mitzvah, she felt accepted by her mother. This disconcerted her. Being accepted by her mother was totally unfamiliar. Part of her wished to run back to the old bad mother who was so much a part of her old self, the one so much identified by her as herself, despite its pathological and defensive origins. To be bad, deprived, punished, rejected, attacked, and abandoned was what her familiar old self was based on. Taking the risk of the unfamiliar could at one time have felt threatening of annihilation. At this later time, she just felt "unmoored." But never was Fairbairn's view of pathology being based on clinging to the original object, when it was a bad object, be more clearly seen. Now that Sharon had felt the depressive

pain and difficult affect states of regret, she could symbolize her internal experience. She could talk about the dynamics of her compulsion to return to the old self and old object in clear and articulate terms. This is how she and I experienced her gradually becoming free.

For the first time, Sharon felt that she had the power and sense of agency to finish her book. She began to actively engage with the work, for the first time in over a year. She could then predict that she could finish the book by the end of the summer. Sharon's capacity to follow through on creativity grew in conjunction with and in dialectic with her capacity to love, as she reached behind her husband's defensive hostility to see his needs and frustrations (see "the love-creativity dialectic," Kavalier-Adler, 1996).

Finally, Sharon's husband let down his guard and revealed all his secret fears of failure and inadequacy to her. He relinquished his use of Sharon as a scapegoat for his inadequate self, as he had experienced this inadequate self through the projective processes of projective-identification.

Theoretical Summary

A critical distinction between Kleinian object relations theory and that of other schools of object relations thinking (particularly in America) is that Kleinian thinking (1940/1975) is attuned to the element of existential guilt as a factor in psychic change. By contrast, the other schools of object relations thinking focus on the affective element of loss alone as having developmental significance in relation to healing traumas and resolving developmental arrest.

Mahler's object relations theory, for example, speaks of the capacity to tolerate the grief of loss as a pivotal determinant of separation-individuation. Mahler does not speak about guilt as interacting with loss in her view of psychic change evolving from the navigation of the separation-individuation phase of development, even though she does acknowledge a range of mourning experience to be natural for separation-individuation to take place. Margaret Mahler speaks of a mild form of depressive affect experience, which she calls "low keyedness" (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman, 1975). Such low keyedness takes place in normal and timely separation-individuation processes, where there has been the internalization of good enough mothering and mother bonding. A more intense form of grief takes place when separation-individuation has been arrested. This more intense form of grief has been called an "abandonment depression" by Masterson (1976, 1981), who follows Mahler's theory and schema of development, particularly in pathological cases of developmental arrest. Another object relations' theorist, from the British Middle School, Michael Balint (1979), speaks of mourning in his "basic fault" cases of preoedipal developmental arrest. John

Bowlby (1969, 1980), likewise, speaks of normal mourning for psychic development, as well as psychic change. Masterson, Balint, and Bowlby, like Mahler, do not mention the pain and anguish of guilt, as an existential and affective aspect of mourning and grief. They only refer to grief in terms of object loss. Fairbairn (1952), another British object relations theorist, speaks of relinquishing old object relations ties, in a traumatic separation process, but refers more to exorcism of bad objects than to any mourning process. When Fairbairn uses the word "guilt" he refers to a spurious or false form of guilt that is essentially a masochistic defense of self-blame, a defense that serves to deny the demonic or "bad object" aspects of the real parent. Authentic existential guilt is never dealt with by Fairbairn.

By contrast to these object relations theorists, Klein (1940/1975, 1957/1980) speaks pointedly and explicitly of existential guilt as a fundamental part of psychic change in the depressive position. The pivotal grief experience for Klein is one in which guilt and loss interact on both affective and cognitive levels. Klein refers to psychic change that occurs primarily due to the tolerance of loss in the service of renewed love and object connection, although she focuses these thoughts mainly on the internal world development. By emphasizing the internal world, Klein is open to the beginnings of developmental thinking about the new psychic structure internalizations that can stem from the object relationships of the psychoanalyst and analysand in psychoanalytic treatment sessions, as she demonstrates at the end of her famous treatise "Envy and Gratitude" (1957). She speaks of her internalization of the good session and good analyst (not the idealized part object analyst, but the actual real good aspect of the analyst) as a contribution to psychic (ego) structure, although she circumscribes the analyst's object relationship with the analysand to that transacted through the offering of interpretations. These beginning thoughts on developmental process are, however, less emphasized by Klein than those on the reparative efforts of the psyche in the context of compulsive and hostile psychic fantasy attacks on the primal other, who is symbolically housed in the internal world, and who is continually displaced onto all current objects in the affectively alive external world. Consequently, Klein is quite aware of the kind of grief that involves an alchemy of loss and guilt. This interpenetration of guilt and loss can lead to self and object reparation and to self and object integration within the domain of Kleinian theory.

My Extension of Klein's Theory

In following Klein on this avenue of thought (Kavaler-Adler, 1993b)—as I find her highly relevant to the clinical situation—I use the word "regret" to refer to a combination of loss and existential guilt that evolves into criti-

cal psychic change. On an affective level, this combination of self-states has a developmental valence that is critically associated with transforming character disorder into character development. I believe that my linguistic amendment of Klein to be truly within the spirit of Klein's clinical theory, which I view as a theory that stands independent of her metapsychology of the death instinct (Kavaler-Adler, 2003a).

My clinical experience illustrates that regret is a signpost to hope if it can be consciously felt and processed. If it cannot be tolerated it can turn to despair and reinforce prior traumatic loss and developmental arrest. My view contrasts with Shabad's (2001) definition of regret as an entrenchment in despair concerning self-sabotage that is more narcissistic in nature and does not relate to hurting another. Shabad reserves the term "remorse" for transgressions against another. My view, on the other hand, speaks of the clinically observable psychic transformation that can evolve through the conscious tolerance of regret. In my view such regret can include remorse. When regret is conscious it can be grieved on an affective level and learned from on a cognitive level. This prevents the repetition of damage we do to our relationships can be prevented in the future. The conscious processing of regret can lead to critical psychic change, as a working through process occurs in which primal modes of regret are reexperienced and reworked.

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